
Report on the 4th Convention of the Russian Socialist Federation: New York City — Sept. 28-Oct. 2, 1918.

by R.W. Finch

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Report Made By: R.W. Finch.

Place Where Made: New York City.

Date When Made: Oct. 17, 1918.

Period For Which Made: Sept. 27, 1918 to Oct. 2nd,
inclusive.

*Title of Case and Offense Charged or Nature
of Matter Under Investigation:*

**RE: BOLSHEVIKI ACTIVITIES IN THE U.S.
Bolsheviki Convention (Intercolonial) in NYC.**

*Statement of Operations, Evidence Collected, Names and
Addresses of Persons Interviewed, Places Visited, Etc.:*

On September 27th [1918], from confidential informants, we received information that the Russian Socialists, or the Russian Bolsheviki Party of America, intended to hold in New York City a conference or convention which would be attended by delegates from as far west as the Pacific coast. We were told that the number of delegates would be about 35; that the meeting would be held secretly at #33 Second Ave., NYC, and would remain in session about 2 days. We were also informed from several of our confidential informants that before the delegates met they had submitted completed questionnaires which had been forwarded them from Detroit and which would be brought to New York completed by the various delegates. We made every effort to secure one of these questionnaires up until September 27th.

We had previously been supplied by the [Justice] Dept. at Washington with a photostat copy of report dated Sept. 10, 1918, made by Operative John

Hughes of the Secret Service, who had secured certain information from Capt. of Detectives of Bayonne, NJ with relation to a reported plot of a revolution in the United States. In working out that case, upon which a separate report has been made, we found, among the effects of one of the suspects, the questionnaire. This questionnaire was issued in two forms, one entitled, "THE PLACE OF THE CONGRESS" and the other "TO ALL THE BRANCHES OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIALIST FEDERATION." They read as follows:

The Place of the Congress.

The City Committee of the 4 Russian Branches of the Socialist Party considers as the fittest place for the congress the City of New York for the following reasons:

First — Freedom of speech and assemblage is guaranteed in New York more than in any other city. Second — Around New York is situated the greater mass of the divisions of the Russian Federation and consequently the total travelling will be less.

Representation in the Congress.

The City Committee deems that the most appropriate way of representation will be the following: Organizations having not more than 50 members will send 1 delegate; those having from 50 to 100 will send 2 delegates; those more than 100 not more than 3 delegates.

The Committee guided by the following considerations recommends the following plan: First — The financial situation of the organization does not permit them to expend larger sums. Second — Experience has shown that sessions with a small representation are more productive and efficient.

All the expenses for the congress are equally divided among the delegates.

The city Committee requests the calling of an extraordinary meeting for the immediate decision of the question whether the congress can take place not later than Sept. 5-10, [for a starting date of] September 28th, 1918. The Committee considers the question of the Congress of the Federation as very important because its deliberations and

the summons must not be connected with any other congresses of the Russian Colony in America.

Answer, Comrades, on the enclosed list of questions, answering all questions, and with the signature of the Secretary and the seal of the Branch. (Send one copy to address O. Tyverovsky, care of Kaminsky, 115 E 96th St., NY and another to the Secretary of the Russian Federation, Comrade Rich, 1192 Hastings St., Detroit, Mich.

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**To All the Branches of the
Russian Socialist Federation.**

Dear Comrades:

The City Central Committee of the 4 Russian Divisions of the Socialist Party in the City of New York in the session of the 20th of July of the current year [1918], considering the state of affairs in the Russian Federation and considering the important events of the present moment carried the following resolution:

For a successful carrying out of our principles it is necessary for:

- A — 1. A regular disciplined organization.
- 2. An exact definition of our program of principles and tactics.
- 3. A strong internal control.

ONLY A CONGRESS OF THE RUSSIAN SOCIALIST FEDERATION IS ABLE TO DECIDE THE SOLUTION OF OUR PROBLEMS.

The City Committee, in view of the above reasons, proposes the following program for the session:

1. The report from localities:
 - A. The number of members of your organization?
 - B. What is the relation of the unorganized mass with your organization?
 - C. How many people frequent your gatherings and mass meetings?
 - D. Is there felt among you a lack of active workers?
 - E. Is there in your city another organization? What is their relation with your branch?
2. On the Organization of the Russian Federation:
 - A. Executive Committee of the Federation.
 - B. The Secretariat of the Federation.
 - C. Administration of the paper *Novyi Mir*.
 - D. Organs of Supervision.
 - E. The organization of the united committee of the All-Russian Revolutionary Federation.
3. Our relations with current events:
 - A. In Russia.
 - B. In America.
4. The question of tactics:
 - A. Our relation with the American Socialist Party and the Socialist Labor Party.
 - B. With trade unions, cooperative unions, and Councils of Labor Deputies (Soviets).
 - C. With the unorganized masses.
5. Our relation with the Russian and the foreign language press.

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The City Committee of the 4 Russian Branches of the Socialist Party caused this convention to be called. We received vague rumors that the secrecy in connection with this meeting was essential because grave matters with relations to the conditions existing between the US and Russia were to be fully discussed at that meeting. We made every effort to get one of our undercover men into the meeting but without success for the reason that only duly accredited delegates with proper credentials were admitted. One of those credentials is in our possession, and a translation of same is as follows:

We hereby certify that Comrade _____ has been elected a delegate of the Russian Branch of the Socialist Party (RCSPAR) SI in session of the Russian Branch of the Socialist Party.

To All Members: In the division are 14 people.

Secretary A. Potin.

We could not use this credential to get one of our men in for the reason that our undercover men are known by other names than that appearing on this paper, in the movement, and no doubt the loss of these credentials was reported at once to the convention.

The questionnaire was sent out by **V. Rich**, Detroit, Mich. (we have already written the Detroit office regarding his actions there) with the following letter:

To All Russian Socialist Divisions:

Dear Comrades:

After a revision had been made in the affairs of the *Novyi Mir*, we came to the conclusion that the present force of employees as well as part of the editorial staff must be replaced by comrades more capable of doing the work. The selection of the new staff requires the careful consideration of the entire Federation. Therefore it is necessary that an immediate call be issued for a session of the Federation. The enclosed order of procedure, worked out by the New York City Committee, with whom the Secretary is in full accord, requires that an extra session immediately be called to decide this matter, and that the filled out blanks be returned to the Secretary not later than Sept. 10 of this year [1918].

A statement of financial revision will be sent to all divisions.

With comradely greetings,

V. Rich.

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There was also another letter from Rich entitled "NOTICE TO ALL RUSSIAN SOCIALIST DIVISIONS," which reads:

Dear Comrades:

Analyzing the present composition of the Soviets in America, the figures show us that in the larger cities, for some reason, a majority of Anarchists predominate in the Soviets, at the time when the funds in the hands of the Socialist divisions are at a high mark. For that reason, the Anarchists everywhere are carrying on an agitation in favor of a meeting of representatives of Soviets and not of organizations. The Secretary, apprehending the danger of a prepondering influence of Anarchists in meetings, earnestly recommends that representatives be chosen from the *organizations*.

A part of the New York Soviet, which was long ago left by the representatives of all Social Democratic divisions, took upon themselves the initiative of calling a meeting, and slinging mud by telling various yarns about the Secretary of the Executive Committee C—K—. I personally was admitted to the meeting of the Executive Committee on August 11 [1918] in New York, at which an account was rendered with corroborating documents. The dirty emanations of Sukharevsky were controverted by documents.

V. Rich.

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It will be noted that Mr. Rich complains about the number of anarchists in the ranks of the Russian Soviets in the US, ordinarily known as the Russian Socialists [*sic.*]. We shall make every effort to find out what the "various yarns" are which Mr. Rich states are being circulated about the Secretary of the Executive Committee, "C—K—."

Agents Sinner and Schlein of this office were posted, on Saturday morning, Sept. 28th [1918], in the neighborhood of 33 Second Ave. and reported that a number of Russians came to this address carrying suitcases, portfolios, etc., went to the 3rd floor, and almost immediately came down to the street again, going in various directions. Reports of those agents for this day will show that some of these men went to the *Novyi Mir*. In the afternoon, when it appeared that the convention was not in session at 33 Second Ave., and we could not find out where it was in session, although we had 3 undercover men trying to do so, the writer went in person to the address and ascer-

tained that the convention was not being held at 33 Second Ave. In the evening we found that the Russian delegates were using a ruse; that of calling at 33 Second Ave., where they were given the address of the *Novyi Mir* (113 E 10th St.), which is also the address of the 8th A.D., Socialist Party. The *Novyi Mir* has recently been barred from the mails and its first class privileges denied to the extend of its mail being turned back to the senders. Information was brought out to us by one of our confidential informants that the *Novyi Mir* in order to get around this Post Office ruling was having its mail sent to the residence of one *Babitz*, 254 W 39th St., NY. This is a private residence in an apartment house and is being used as a "cover" address to circumvent the PO ruling. Later in the evening, when I was able to get in touch with some of our confidential men, I directed them to cover this address, and it was found that the convention had been in session in that apartment and had adjourned about a half hour before the arrival of our agents.

I had reported the convention earlier in the day to Supt. DeWoody, who communicated with Washington. My instructions were that we could not take any steps to interfere with this meeting other than to have someone pose as a newspaper man, and in the event that admittance of representatives of the press was refused by the delegates, Agents of this Dept. were then to make themselves known and request only information as to the purpose of the meeting. By reason of the fact that we could not locate the meeting from information at hand, these instructions could not be carried out.

On Sunday [Sept. 29, 1918], however, from a confidential informant, we received word that part of the secrecy of this convention was due to the fact that the Russians themselves wanted to decide certain questions without interference from the American Socialist Party, and that some of this secrecy was due to their desire to keep their meeting place unknown to representatives of the American Socialist Party because one of the questions they wanted to decide unhampered and without any restrictions was their exact status with the American Socialist Party as there has arisen from time to time between the Russian Soviets in the US and the Socialist Party some friction.

It developed, also, that Branch #2, one of the 4 Russian Branches of NY, were *persona non grata* to this

convention, and efforts were made to keep Branch #2 from ascertaining the location of the meeting place. We were informed by one of our men that practically all of the questionnaires returned showed that the various Russian Soviets in the US represented in this convention were in favor of taking active steps in the matter of questions between Russia and the United States today. We ascertained that the convention, although lasting 5 days, was not held at the same place 2 days in succession. Each day the delegates would call at at least 3 addresses before they would be taken to the address for the day at which the convention was to be held. Rather than take any further chances of uncovering our men, we made arrangements to secure the minutes of this meeting when the convention was over, and let the matter rest at that.

Attached hereto will be found the minutes of the convention, called "MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY, NEW YORK, SEPT. 28, 29, 30, OCTOBER 1ST, 1918." We feel that this document is very important.

Particular attention is referred to the 1st resolution, appearing at the top of page 10 of the minutes.

We believe that the minutes prove conclusively a contention we have long maintained, i.e., that the Russians in the US intend to organize for the purpose of allying themselves with those parties who are opposed to the present American form of government. From day to day we hear a great deal about the fact that they are planning to campaign upon the termination of hostilities in Europe for the purpose of bringing about some change in the governmental situation in the United States. We have heard the names of the Non-Partisan League, the IWW, followers of the People's Council, etc., etc., all lining up their forces for this action. This Russian convention was dominated, we are told, entirely by what is known as the "*Novyi Mir* faction." This Russian newspaper is edited by one **Gregory Weinstein**, a personal friend of Trotsky, and Weinstein's friends claim he receives immunity from arrest and prosecution because of this friendship with Trotsky and Lenin. It is often stated that the US Government would not dare prosecute Weinstein because to do so would bring about further complications between the US and Russia.

We are keeping this Russian situation closely under surveillance.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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